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Bring your dad to work day: Father of a U.S. Navy pharmacist supports humanitarian mission

Filed under HOSPITALS, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF, U.S. NAVY (NO COMMENTS)

Lt. Cmdr. Emily Zywicke is the Pharmacy Department head onboard the USNS Mercy Pacific Partnership 2012 mission. Pacific Partnership 2012 is the largest annual humanitarian and civic action (HCA) mission in the Asia-Pacific region. The mission delivers humanitarian civil assistance and conduct environmental sustainability missions from USNS Mercy to the host nations of Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Hello, my name is John Zywicke and I am a University of California San Diego (UCSD) Non-Government Officer and Pharmacist aboard the USNS Mercy (T-AH 19). I volunteer in the pharmacy department alongside my daughter. I served in Vietnam more than 40 years ago. This is my first time back since then, and I get to share it with her.



in the same time frame, I applied and began a process of paperwork of my own such as a proof of license, graduation, statement of motivation, and goals for being a UCSD volunteer pharmacist. It turns out that our pharmacy paths crossed by fact that Emily is the Pharmacy Department Head on board the USNS Mercy, and I was the Pharmacy Officer for the Medical Command while stationed in Long Binh, Vietnam. This was after servicing as the Executive Officer of a Medical Clearing Company with the 82nd Airborne in 1969-1970.

While serving on Mercy, we prepare medications for MEDCAPs. This was accomplished by pre-packing thousands of dispensing units, and properly labeling them in host nation

I learned about Mercy from my daughter, Lt. Cmdr. Emily Zywicke. Another Navy pharmacist that went on the mission in 2010 told her how rewarding it was. Emily put in the required paperwork for the mission and was accepted and

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language. The pharmacy teams have gone ashore and served host nation patients and filled thousands of medications weekly. With the help of host nation translators and partner nation assistance, we have fulfilled our pharmacy mission.

After 44 years in the pharmacy profession and my two years in the U.S. Army, it is very humbling to work with my daughter and give back to people less fortunate than ourselves. Returning to Vietnam after retirement, and working with the U.S. Navy and Non-Government personnel is the highlight of my career.

In summary, our degrees are 37 years apart, but we are one in family and in mission. We have been able to problem solve, and build the USNS Mercy Pharmacy team together. I am happy and grateful for the chance UCSD gave me to participate in the MEDCAP missions, the chance to work with host nation pharmacy staff and along-side participating nations, which led to a successful Pacific Partnership 2012.

My name is Lt. Cmdr. Emily Zywicke, Pharmacy Department Head onboard the USNS Mercy Pacific Partnership 2012 mission.



I am very close with my family. I have two older sisters, a younger brother and lovely parents. Moving to a southern state for my first duty station after growing up in Wisconsin was a big move. My duty stations were never close to home, so calls home were frequent to my parents and siblings. I never would have dreamt that I would someday be eating dinner nightly with my father, much less be sailing and serving with my father in the same department, under my direction as department head, on a U.S. Navy deployment.

My father served as the pharmacist officer for his command in Vietnam. His duties included inventory management, performing clinic pharmaceutical inspections within Vietnam, pharmaceutical, medical and surgical equipment procurement and reviewing medication requests from Australian, Thailand, and Korean medical forces. 43 years later, I can report that I am performing similar duties, under a much different mission, but in the same country... Vietnam.

We are the first father/daughter team aboard Mercy. It has been an honor and a special gift to serve with my dad for three months. In Fact, many “firsts” were had aboard with my dad, including practicing our profession together, manning the rails next to one another on the flight deck into Subic Bay, touring the Corregidor off the coast of Manila Bay, pre-packing Vietnamese pharmaceuticals in a 100+ degree trailer in Vinh, Vietnam, filming a father's day video where he jumped out of the background after I wished him a happy father's day from somewhere in the Pacific, and celebrating his 69th birthday with the pharmacy crew with a Baskin Robbins Oreo-ice cream cake.

Most notably, a true “first” is that the roles have been reversed on this voyage, as my dad is now working under my direction. As a pharmacy intern, I

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occasionally trained under my dad and gained an appreciation for the profession and art of pharmacy, as well as how to be a leader.

I have learned by example and listened to my dad’s adages over the years; “Don’t sweat the small stuff,” “Go team!” and “Savor the moments.” I am able to employ his mottos and lead by his example on this voyage. I can’t imagine the austere conditions he endured during the Vietnam War, with minimal resources to contact home or enjoy the comforts of the United States.

I feel fortunate to be able to experience my profession in Vietnam under a humanitarian partnership mission. Relishing in the evening sunset chatter on the ship’s rails after chow has been a favorite pastime. Throughout my training and competitions as a Division I swimmer at the University of Iowa, my grueling years spent in pharmacy school, and my challenging travels and experiences overseas, my dad has always been my voice of reason, my motivator and my biggest cheerleader from afar, but is now ‘present and accounted for’ in my department, encouraging me on to be the best Naval Officer I can be.

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